

ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER
479

On the day the second of the above letters was written, President Mix Faure died suddenly and tinder what seemed to be suspicious circumstances. It is probable that his seizure was caused by the shock he had experienced a few hours previously when certain revelations made to him by a foreign visitor of princely rank had dispelled Ms confidence in some of the prominent military men whom he had so long trusted and supported. The news naturally filled Zola with anxiety, for the future course of events might largely depend on the character of M. Faure's successor. Fortunately the choice of the French Congress fell on M. Emile Loubet, then President of the Senate. Other important incidents — M. D'oulde's attempt at a coup d'etat, the transference of the revision of the Dreyfus case from the Criminal Chamber of the Cour de Cassation to the entire body — kept Zola in a nervous state throughout February and March. His birthday fell on April 2, and Vizetelly, finding it impossible to be with him on that occasion, wrote him a note to which he replied as follows :

My dear *Confrere* and Friend, — Thanks for your good wishes on the occasion of the anniversary of my birth. I feel deeply touched by them in the state of sorrowful emotion in which I am. You write me some very good and true things which go straight to my heart. And I thank you today for the devotion and the discreet attention which you have

never ceased to show me since the day when I set foot on this land of exile. I shall expect you the day you please to select, and with kind remembrances to your family, I cordially press your hand.

ZOLA.

As the time for the decision of the Cour de Cassation drew near, the novelist became more and more restless. He